

White-tailed Deer

by Jake Lane

Originally performed by

Abigail Williams as “Harley”

and Christina Ledbetter as “Piper”

Monday morning, 10:17 a.m.

Piper and Harper are sitting at a desk across from each other in Piper's office.

Piper

Coffee?

Harley

Already had some. You're angry with me.

Piper

Harley, let's just. . . I know neither of us wants to be here longer than necessary, so let's get right into things and handle this professionally. I didn't want to call you in today, but I had to.

(beat.)

I understand the pain you're in—

Harley

No, you don't.

Piper

(beat.)

Excuse me?

Harley

You may know the same amount of pain, but not the same kind.

Piper

(pause.)

Whatever the case may be, I know your personal situations are not ideal right now.

Harley

Do you have the right to know that? Legally?

Piper

I'm speaking in the broadest of terms.

Harley

And you've yet to say anything damaging.

Piper

Correct.

Harley

(indicating herself)

But this meeting will have casualties.

Piper

(shifting in her seat, half-joking)

Well, wars aren't won by *creating* life.

Harley

They're won by destroying it. Decimation. And now this is a war?

Piper

Every struggle today is amplified until it's considered something far worse: an overturning of a dynasty or a gut-wrenching battle. Label this as you will.

(she turns to Harley's exit paperwork on the desk in front of her)

Harley

(she has taken her phone out of her pocket and is fidgeting with it)

They sent you to do the dirty work, huh?

Piper

(dismissing her)

You're aware, of course, that there are grounds for immediate termination of your contract.

Harley

"Of course."

Piper

In the face of all of this, however, we wanted the chance to speak with you again.

Harley

We?

Piper

We wanted to ensure that this behavior is not patterned behavior.
And we believe it is our duty, as your soon-to-be former employer, to ask several questions
in relation to your wellbeing and your season of employment.

Harley

I don't see the need for a psychological examination.

Piper

(she begins reading the questions off the paperwork)

Do you believe we established an atmosphere of trust?

In your experience, have we fostered a community in which you could succeed mentally
and physically, as well as in your career?

Harley

You have to go through all these questions before you fire me?

Piper

(again, reading)

Did you take advantage of the weekly mental health check-ins?

Harley

No, actually. Once, and it wasn't helpful.

Piper

(looking up)

How so?

Harley

It was dull.

Piper

Like a knife?

Harley

(placing her phone down on the desk)

The word dull that we use today actually came from two parallel words in Old English
and Middle Low Germanic, neither of which had to do with knives, contrary to what you

might think. Both, however, had similar meanings, and were used to describe a person: “slow, stupid, and. . . idiotic.”

Piper

(pause.)

Are you aware of any specific actions that made this an unsafe workplace, physically, emotionally, or mentally? Would you consider your time here to have been a benefit to you moving forward in this field? And finally, do you have any recommendations for improvements in maintaining the emotional stamina of our workplace moving forward?

Thank you for your time, Harley. You can go as soon as you sign this.

(she places the paperwork and the pen on the desk in front of Harley)

Harley

I'd like to hear the reason.

Piper

For your termination?

Harley

Yes, I'd like to hear the reason.

Piper

(scoffs)

I don't understand. I am trying to handle this delicately and professionally, but from the onset of this meeting, you've been incredibly hostile.

Harley

Yes.

Piper

So you admit that? You agree with me?

Harley

I've never found pleasure in bringing my defenses down. Defensiveness is vital to survival.

Piper

No, Harley. It's not.

(she picks up the pen and holds it in front of Harley, offering it)

Harley

(she holds her phone in her hand and examines it)

Have you ever had your power questioned?

Piper

Constantly. And ruthlessly.

Harley

Even at this job your daddy handed you?

Piper

(beat. she puts down the pen.

realizing this isn't enough, she yanks the paper back to her side of the desk.)

Your contract has been terminated.

Harley

So nothing I say now can be held against me.

Piper

...

Harley

This, all of this, this constant stress on authenticity, and health, and wellness. How has that taken a toll? Can you even begin to understand the hell you are creating?

Piper

(she stares at her for a beat, aghast.)

Harley, you don't...

...

*then, chuckling, she takes out a piece of gum and unwraps it
she takes her time)*

Fine. Have your rant.

(she puts the gum in her mouth and begins chewing)

Harley

*(these words fall out of her and land in her lap.
they satisfy her.)*

Do you enjoy being the hand of the leviathan? Being the great “doer of wrong” for this behemoth of a sea monster? Being at the disposal of others, knowing they’d rather choke than do the things they have you do? I’m trivial to you, aren’t I?

I was, at least, before I made ripples, before I shattered the glass-like seascape of your perfected, formulated “atmosphere.”

You needed me to make a mistake. You needed a problem to wrangle, and you needed blood on your hands to prove you’re worthy of the power you have. The power you’ve been given.

So I’m perfect, right? Now I am. Trivial to perfect. What a trajectory.

But maybe I was always perfect. Until one mistake.

Maybe.

So why was I fired?

...

(Piper chews her gum)

...

You don’t care about me.

You don’t care about people.

Honestly. . . you don’t even care about this company.

You care about power.

You suffocate and squeeze people until they have no other choice but to explode, blood and guts dripping, pouring out of them, and then, you *keep squeezing*, you interrogate and terrorize them with your “training” and your “check-ins” until they slip up, and that’s when you jump and attack their dead, bruised, beaten bodies, with your daddy’s gold-plated knife.

Piper

(she stands.

the following flies out of her, tears, spit, and all. her rage is full-grown)

You are fired because you got intoxicated and vandalized company property.

Your time here is over because you—a thoughtless, heedless, manic-depressive monster of a human—got drunk, drove your car into a beautiful, majestic white-tailed deer, severed its head, and placed that head on the doorstep of your job.

You watched the soul trickle out of an innocent thing, its very existence reduced to just two lifeless eyes bulging out of its head on the pavement and bearing the reflection of a drunk, deranged psychopath. You let your illness destroy you from the inside, and you spread your filth on our name.

(she’s close to tears)

You're fired because *you* are a monster. Your bloody hands should never have touched a piece of this company's property again!

And I will cook storms, I will conceive deep, murderous, towering waves that will devastate you and destroy you.

(at this point, she's almost screaming)

Because you.

Deserve it.

Harley

(long beat.

she stands

and looks Piper right in the eyes)

I'll die a king.